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The Spies Who Came Into The Court

As complicated as a James Bond movie and every bit as melodramatic is the real life trial under way in Baltimore. For a bonus, it throws in some basic questions about rights, privilege, and the machinations of America's spy system and The Agency that runs it.

Principals in the action are Erik Heine, an Estonian emigre who has established a reputation as a freedom fighter, and Juri Raus, also an Estonian, whom he is suing for slander. Heine alleges that Raus on three occasions accused him of being a Communist and a Soviet agent. Raus denies making the statements at the times mentioned in the suit but admits that he has called the plaintiff a Soviet agent or collaborator. Involved are Heine's claims for \$10,000 in compensatory damages and \$100,000 in punitive damages.

What murks up the whole action is that Raus is an admitted operative of the Central Intelligence Agency. On at least one occasion five CIA lawyers have tried to keep Raus from having to answer questions. And the CIA has told the court: "When Juri Raus spoke concerning the plaintiff on the occasions about which complaint is made, he was acting within the scope and course of his employment by the Agency on behalf of the United States."

All this has evidently made a strong impression on the federal judge who is hearing the case. Several times he has seemed on the verge of granting the defendant summary judgment on his claim of absolute privilege.

The chronic follower of spy stuff in books, movies and television shows, on the other hand, will remain unimpressed. To those versed

in the methods and manners of international intrigue, this is a normal build-up to a much more complicated situation, one that is likely to be embellished by a couple of deadly and well-endowed female agents as it progresses.

Unfortunately, in real life more practical questions must be considered. Even in a completely open society, should the individual's rights to a good reputation jeopardize, as the judge has said, "the entire U.S. counter-espionage apparatus?" On the other hand, should an admitted counter-spy — who didn't bring up his CIA affiliation until a year after the court action was brought — be allowed the complete shield of a government immune to legal processes?

One more thing we'd like to know: If Heine really is a Soviet agent, why hasn't he been arrested?

Line-O-Types

The proposed new Code Enforcement Committee as urged by the Ordinance Committee of Meriden's Court of Common Council is an improvement over original plans. But it still leaves as odd man out the Building Inspector, who is the only one qualified by experience and technical training to pass on the hard-tacks specifics of the Building Code.

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Meriden will have a 5-3-4 school system next year. The city didn't really plan it that way, but that's the way the kids shook down.

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"We're ready to roll," is the word from MIDC. And with the traffic on the big highways rolling strategically by the location, it can't be long now.